

in some such mood as this Contarini falls in with one Winter, an artist, a man of philosophic mind and wide experience, who, in his serene wisdom and penetrating gaze into the hidden springs of character and the deeper realities of life, is of the same family as Horace Grey and Beckendorff in the earliest of the novels, or as Sidonia in the great trilogy of Disraeli's full maturity. Winter recognises the poetic gift of the child, teaches him that before he can hope to be a great artist he must study his art, and leaves him with some talismanic rules which he had 'copied off an obelisk amid the ruins of Thebes': —

Be patient: cherish hope. Read more: ponder less. Nature is more powerful than education: time will develop everything.

In accordance with this oracular advice the boy determines to be patient and that a book shall be ever in his hand; but the first he reads, a History of Venice, reawakens the love of action that slumbers in him and gives another turn to his aspirations. His 'consular blood demands a sword,' he resolves to be a Doge, and, as a first step, to run away from school and set out for Venice; and so end his schooldays.

After many other youthful adventures and many shiftings of ambition Contarini at length becomes private secretary to his father, and developing into a callous and unscrupulous worldling so much distinguishes himself in his new career that in a few years he is made an Undersecretary of State. In a conference with the ambassadors of the great powers, he, by a sudden stroke of audacity⁷⁰, wins a diplomatic success which seems to open a path to the attainment of his highest ambitions. The passage in which he describes his feelings at this moment of triumph is worth quoting at length as a specimen of Disraeli's style at its best.